



Press Release



Experts and the ECOWAS Specialized Ministerial Technical Committee on Agriculture gathered around the Implementation of the Regional Food Security Reserve in the Context of the Food and Nutrition Crisis in West Africa

Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 4 June 2018: In view of the ongoing food crisis and the crucial importance of the implementation of the Regional Food Security Reserve (RFSR) desired and decided by the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government, the ECOWAS Commission brought together Agricultural Experts and Technical and Financial Partners in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, to discuss a boiling issue in the region. Experts will discuss and outline proposals for responses to face the food and nutrition crises that have become recurrent in the ECOWAS region and in the Sahel.

The preparatory Experts' meeting (4-5 June 2018) to that of the Ministers of Agriculture (6 June 2018) will discuss a set of issues that will be submitted to arbitration and validation for their adoption by the ECOWAS Council of Statutory Ministers.

This high-level meeting focuses on the review and adoption of the operating modalities and the operationalization of the ECOWAS Regional Food Security Reserve and the Food and Nutrition Crisis in the Sahel and West Africa. Experts will examine and validate among others, (i) the establishment of the governance bodies (Management Committee and Steering Committee), (ii) the technical regulation on the operationalization of the Regional Reserve and (iii) the urgent measures in response to the ongoing food and nutrition crisis in the region.

For Mr. Pierre Emmanuel Ouédraogo, Director of Cabinet, representing the Minister of Agriculture and Hydraulic Facilities, Burkina Faso remains committed to supporting the process of the operationalization of the Regional Food Security Reserve. As evidenced by its involvement in the warehousing of 5297 tons of cereals of the Regional Reserve in Dédougou by the Société Nationale de Gestion des Stocks de Sécurité (SONAGESS) and the Headquarters

Agreement for the Secretariat of the Network of Public Companies of Food Security Stocks Management in the Sahel and West Africa (RESOGEST).

Ms. Hélène Bali, Secretary General, representing the Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries of Togo, took advantage of the opening of the meeting to challenge the ECOWAS Commission on the urgency to operationalize, as soon as possible, the Regional Fund for Agriculture and Food. This Fund shall allow the development of the agricultural sector and the financing of the operations of the Reserve, which currently has a stock of only 25,740 tons of cereals stored in the national storage companies of Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Niger and Nigeria. Indeed, the operationalization of the Regional Fund will allow the Regional Reserve to fully play its role, which is to: (i) complement the efforts of Member States to provide food assistance, (ii) express regional solidarity to Member States and affected populations through transparent, equitable and predictable mechanisms, (iii) contribute to food sovereignty and political, economic and social integration of West Africa.

The ECOWAS Commissioner for Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources, Mr. Sékou Sangaré, informed the Experts about the results of the analyzes of the food and nutrition situation carried out last April by the Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA). The Network estimates that 7.1 million people are in need of urgent food and nutrition assistance, of which 3.7 million are in north-eastern Nigeria. They are mostly pastoralists and agro-pastoralists, particularly women and children. In addition to worsening livelihoods and food prices, the situation is exacerbated by persistent insecurity in the Lake Chad basin, the Liptako-Gourma region and central Mali. If appropriate measures are not promptly taken, the number of people affected could reach 10.6 million by the lean season in June-August 2018 and the number of malnourished children could increase from 1.1 to 1.6 million.

Moreover, The Network highlights the serious under-investment in food security and resilience programs due to significant budget pressures on governments in the region as a result of the security crisis. This warning must be recognized by the international community in order to prevent hunger and malnutrition from undermining the long-term development and stability of the region: Winning the battle against terrorism should not undermine the region's fight against hunger and malnutrition.

Considering the alarming food and nutrition security situation in the Sahel and West Africa, Member states will consult each other on their expectations from regional institutions, and particularly their expectations from the Regional Food Security Reserve, in order to strengthen their capacity for national responses to the food, nutrition and pastoral crisis.

It is expected from the Ouagadougou discussions that the Ministers in charge of Agriculture of the ECOWAS Member States validate the regulatory provisions relating to the operationalization of the Regional Food Security Reserve and adopt guidelines relating to emergency measures in response to the food and nutrition crisis some of the ECOWAS Member States are going through.

Participants to these meetings include: (i) high level experts, ECOWAP / CAADP-PNIASAN focal points at country level, (ii) food crisis prevention and management leaders or directors general of national companies in charge of food security stocks management, (iii) representatives of the technical organizations partners to ECOWAS, (iv) representatives of the financial partners, (v) representatives of the agricultural socio-professional organizations. Their

conclusions will be submitted to the Ministers in charge of Agriculture and Food and Nutrition Security of the ECOWAS Member States scheduled for Wednesday, June 6, 2018.

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